

# ADOLSENSE

PREPARING FOR ADULTHOOD

*RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOUR*  
*TO PROMOTE HEALTH*

RESOURCE & REFERENCE CENTRE  
PSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECTS OF AIDS

Dept. of Psychiatry, Unit II

Christian Medical College

Vellore

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## PREFACE

This booklet evolves from the efforts of a group of teachers from various schools in Vellore who spent many hours writing and peer reviewing the output. It has subsequently gone through further modifications after being reviewed by other professionals as well as a series of field tests with senior school children.

Even though the booklet aims at older school children and college students, we feel that the concept of responsible behavior for health starts early. All aspects of healthy behavior are not addressed here, for eg. oral hygiene, balanced diet, etc. We feel that this is not the total curriculum for a child and teachers, particularly of very young children, are encouraged to use other resources. The agenda here addresses adolescents and focuses on behavior during this time taking into account the various cultural sensitivities unique to our country.

This booklet addresses issues in growing-up: relationships, emotions, marriage, pregnancy, contraception, drug abuse, STDs and AIDS. Common questions not easily asked or answered are discussed here. The basic idea is to give the adolescent enough facts so that he or she can take informed decisions. Such decisions are the basis for responsible behaviour which will promote and maintain health. Many children who took part in the field trials with this booklet felt that the information was not necessarily new for them, but were grateful to have had it authenticated.

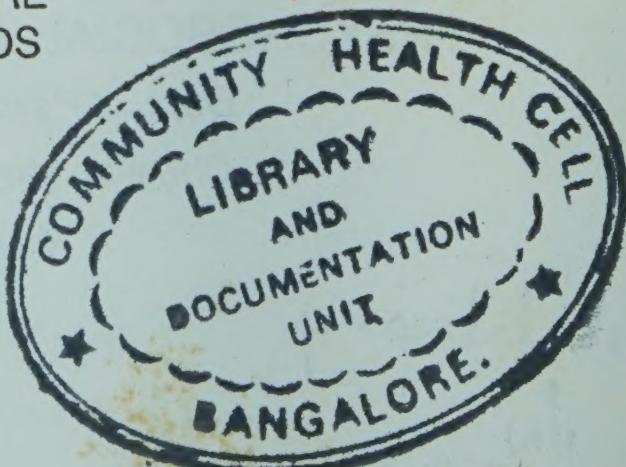
We enjoyed making this booklet happen and we hope you find it useful. Among others, the efforts by the teachers who worked on the drafts, Dr. Mary Jacob for her input on STDs, the students and others who reviewed, pretested the booklet and suggested the road signs, Prem and Sam for their input on the cover and Ford Foundation for overall support are gratefully acknowledged. We do solicit your feedback and would like to hear from you in terms of improving this booklet. Further information if needed can be had from the address below.

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## What is adolescence?

Adolescence is that period in our lives which roughly spans the ages of 12 to 20 years.

It is one of the most fascinating periods of human life that marks the transition from being a dependent child to becoming an *independently functioning adult*.

It is a time of considerable changes in virtually all aspect of our functioning: changes in physical stature, physiological and endocrine changes, *changes in our patterns of thinking, in our attitude and ideals*, our relationships, our moral standards, and our abilities regarding our future careers.



It is a time of acquiring new skills, attaining mastery over our environment, learning to handle new responsibilities and gaining control over our emotions and thoughts.

It prepares us to become adults and to face adult life with *confidence in our abilities*.

You are all adolescents, and will from your personal experiences, realize that over the past few years you have experienced moments of doubt, anxiety, sadness, anger and occasionally despair.

These are emotions felt by all adolescents. They are the normal responses to the tremendous changes you are facing in your lives. If you understand the various changes you are undergoing as well as the ones you are likely to encounter, it may help you to cope better and view this period as a *challenge, rather than a problem*. You may even enjoy it.

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## *What are changes you will undergo as an adolescent?*

Let us look at them systematically.

### **(1) Physical, physiological and endo-crinological changes :**

Adolescence is a period of *change and growth* in most of your body systems. This period starts with the attainment of Puberty - a time, about which you must have learnt from your books, when your endocrine system starts producing large amounts of hormones that changes your body from that of a child to that of an adult.



If you look at a photograph of yourself taken around the age of 10 years and compare it with your image in a mirror, you will realize that the most apparent change is that you have grown taller.

Girls generally start growing taller faster than boys, but boys catch up within a few years. So if you are a boy and shorter than the girls in your class, *don't worry*, you'll be taller than most of them by the time you are in college. Unless you are a pygmy !!

You will also realize that your body has changed shape and that your body looks *more like an adult*.

If you are a boy, this means that you will see muscles where once there was only fat, you will find the beginning of a moustache and beard, you will also find hair growing in your chest and groin. However, some of you may not have any signs of a moustache or hair on your chest. Don't worry, it will come later. It does not mean that you are not manly. Anyway if you don't have hair on your chest, all it means is that you don't have hair on your

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chest! Your voice will also change one day from the high pitched voice of a child to an adult's deeper voice. You may also notice that your penis may get erect often, especially in the morning when you awake but also on many occasions when you are excited, angry or afraid. These are normal events. Your testes will also start producing spermatozoa which means that you are now capable of fathering a child.

If you are girl, your bodily changes will include enlargement of your breasts and nipples, widening of your hips, growth of hair in armpits and genital area. However the most striking change you will undergo is the beginning of menstruation, 3 - 5 days of bleeding from your uterus once a month that will occur through your life till you are in your 40's. Hopefully you were aware of this as a normal event when it occurred, otherwise you may have been worried or afraid that something terrible was happening to you. It is important that you realize that this is a normal, healthy, phenomenon even though some people may tell you that you are unclean during this time. Provided you take normal sanitary precautions, this is not true. The onset of menstruation only means that you are now physically capable of becoming a mother, something to accept as normal rather than be ashamed of.



It is also important to realize that the onset of puberty **varies from boys to girls** and even between boys themselves and girls. In girls the average age is around 12 - 13 years but may range from 10 years to 16 years. In boys this may usually occur 1 to 2 years later than with girls.

## (2) Emotional changes in adolescence:

Although your bodies rapidly change and grow into adult form, your emotional development takes **longer to really become stable**.

This means that though your bodies are capable of fulfilling adult roles, your emotions may not be completely free from patterns and reactions seen when you were younger. The

people around you including your parents may not realize this sometimes; so when you worry about the various changes you are facing, they may think you are moody.

On the other hand, you may expect to be *treated like a grown up* and want to do grownup things without realizing that it would probably be wiser to wait until you really are an adult so that you can understand the responsibilities and consequences of your actions better.



You may yourselves expect to behave confidently like a grown up, but lose confidence in yourself when you find you get anxious while trying. Don't worry - as you grow older you will be *emotionally more confident*.

This is also a time when you can get easily upset when people don't treat you like an adult and you may tend to rebel against anyone who challenges your right to do so - your parents, teachers, etc. If you pause to realize that your parents and teachers have also been teenagers like you, difficult though it may be to imagine, then it may be easier to accept their advice to wait till you are older before doing certain things.

Another important aspect of the emotional changes that you will face is a realization that *people of the opposite sex are no longer irritating but attractive*.

Curiosity about sexual matters is a common part of growing up and an essential part of preparing for adulthood. Sexual fantasies about people of the opposite sex are common and are not abnormal. However, since society is unfortunately often secretive about sexual

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matters, you may feel that what you are undergoing is wrong and may feel guilty.

Your friends may also make fun of you if you show any interest in a person of the opposite sex.

This may give you the impression that friendship between a boy and a girl can only be sexual and not like that between a boy and a boy or a girl and a girl. Some of you may on the other hand, react by avoiding people of the opposite sex, or making fun of them. None of these are desirable.

*This is a time to learn to treat members of the other sex with respect and dignity. It will help you all through your life.*

**REDUCE  
SPEED  
NOW**

Your sexual curiosity and fantasies as well as the hormonal changes you are undergoing may arouse strong sexual feelings in you, and you may attempt to satisfy these feelings by masturbation (i.e. stimulation of the genitals to achieve sexual satisfaction). This is a common activity during adolescence, but one that often arouses intense guilt or shame. Many religions and cultures do not approve of this. Some people even state that masturbation is physically harmful and can damage your physical and mental health. Among males it is commonly stated masturbation can damage the genitals or that loss of semen during masturbation can cause physical weakness. Sometimes during sleep boys may have spontaneous emission of semen which some believe may also cause physical weakness. There is also a belief that one drop of semen is made up of many drops of blood; however there is no medical evidence to support this or the view that masturbation or loss of semen causes physical harm of any sort.

It is important to realize that sexual fantasies and curiosity are a normal part of growing up.

It is also important to realize that while sexuality is enjoyable for both young men and women, it is truly fulfilling only in the context of a mature emotional relationship, and that it also imposes some responsibilities on you. As adolescents, you are physically capable of sexual functioning and even of emotionally falling in love, but you must realize that it is often wiser to wait until you are financially independent and socially accepted as adults before you try to convert your curiosity into actual practice.

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This may seem like old fashioned views to some of you modern youngsters. You may ask, "what is wrong with premarital sex?"

First, the girl may get pregnant. Second, even if she doesn't, there is the real possibility that one of you may feel guilty or upset that you have done something wrong, or worry that pregnancy will occur, or that you will both get caught. Any or all of which are enough to ruin your relationship. Can you both then handle these consequences?

Some of you guys may then ask, "what if I go to a prostitute? I don't have to worry about pregnancy or emotional relationships. What you then have to worry about is the real possibility of getting a sexually transmitted disease, especially a fatal one like AIDS. It's certainly not worth the risk.

Finally, most people agree that sex without the emotional involvement, can never be truly satisfying or beautiful.



Some of you may find it difficult to divert your mind from sexual matters. It may help if you take up some physical activity like jogging, sports etc., or some hobby, or even study harder. This will help you *grow in a balanced manner.*

### **(3) Changes in your thinking and behaviour:**

You will find that studies require new ways of thinking. In earlier classes, it was possible to memorize subjects. In 10th to 12th standards, you will require to start using abstract reasoning or problem solving skills i.e. the ability to understand the basic concepts in the lesson rather than remember each word in the lesson.

You will also discover that your understanding of events in your environment improves, and the *ability to arrive at your own conclusions* to various situations develops. This may make

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you question things that were taught to you earlier by your elders, which you accepted without questioning. This includes moral values, attitudes and religious beliefs, especially when you *discover the injustices, corruption and hypocrisy in society*. Your immediate reaction may be to reject everything you learnt as wrong.

It is probably wiser to examine these values and beliefs for yourself; to understand the relevance of these to your own life and accept the truth in them, even if people whom you once thought were perfect are not practicing what they taught.



During adolescence you will find that your *friends are very important to you* and what they think of you is more important than what your parents think of you. This is normal and prepares you to become independent of your parents and form your own relationships.

However this also makes you want to be like your friends - and they may urge you to do things which you should not really be doing - like starting to smoke, drink, neglect your studies, steal, gamble, visit prostitutes, etc.

While some degree of experimenting with how much freedom you have is normal, you must understand that **YOU HAVE A CHOICE OF SAYING NO** to any one of these pressures from your friends. Some of the activities may land you in serious trouble; your friends may not be able to help you then.

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*You do not become an adult by doing things even adults should not be doing.* You do not

also become an adult by acting like one. Adulthood is a period of your life, not just a way of doing things. Your turn will come, and then the choices you make will be yours and not someone else's.



### **WHAT SHOULD YOU BE DOING AS AN ADOLESCENT?**



*Primarily accepting the changes you are undergoing as normal as well as temporary.*

*Learning to interact with your friends of both sexes and treating them with the same degree of respect.*

*Learning to enjoy the various new skills you acquire, the new knowledge you learn and the new opportunities that open before you.*



*Do not be afraid to ask questions of your teachers and parents. Most of the time you will get answers that will enable you to think through and arrive at your own conclusions.*

*Finally in every thing you do, remember that YOU have a choice. How you handle the choice may make a considerable difference to your life and influence how you behave as an adult.*

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## When does one become an adult?

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Although adulthood is considered to begin by the time one is 21 years of age, some of you may have to shoulder adult responsibilities even before this.

Becoming an adult implies that one is capable of functioning independently from one's parents. It also involves a lot of decisions especially those regarding one's career and marriage, among other things.

### How does one choose a career ?

This is probably the most important decision that you will have to make in the coming years.



Some of you may be very sure already that you want to become an engineer or a doctor or a teacher etc. Others among you may plan to take over your father's business, or start one of your own. Some of you may not be very sure what exactly you want to do yet, but will probably make up your minds in time.

It may help you in making this decision if you realise that in the ultimate analysis, *all occupations are equally important to society.*

More important than the prestige or money that a particular job might bring you is the satisfaction you will get in doing your job well.

This means that even though you do not get into a professional course of your choice inspite of doing your best, *you can be equally happy, and contribute equally to society, by doing some other job to the best of your ability.*

## How does one prepare for marriage ?

Perhaps the first thing you need to do is to make sure that you have some means of *supporting yourself without having to depend on your parents* before you decide to get married.



There really is no great need to hurry to get married. Late adolescence and early adulthood is a time for higher education, training and careers. It is important to settle these issues before marriage. Even for girls, although you may not want to take up an independent career or employment, the *potential ability to be financially independent is important* in the way you can face life in future.

It is also important to realise that marriage is a commitment you are making to love, honour and cherish your partner for the rest of your life

When two people live together there are bound to be some misunderstandings and arguments; these are normal. Some of these can be minimized if the expectation of the partners are similar and they are not totally different kinds of people.

Hence if you are the kind of person who is very ambitious and wants to work very hard, it will help to have a partner who shares these expectations. It will also help to reduce friction in marriage if you are aware of your own faults and try and correct them.

While individuals differ, most women expect their husbands to be affectionate, help them share family responsibilities, spend time with them and treat them with respect.

Similarly, most men expect their wives to look after their homes, not find fault or criticize them all the time, and treat them with respect.

It is a common myth among adolescent boys that *girls are attracted to a tough he-man* like 'Rambo'. This makes them act tough and show off. The influence of

T.V., films, advertisements etc. in furthering this attitude is phenomenal.

However, most girls would prefer to marry a man who is kind and considerate irrespective of whether he looks like a film star or not.

Similarly while the girls who dress up, wear make up and are very friendly with boys are often very popular, *many boys ultimately marry girls who they consider sensible and respectable.*

Hence there is really no need to try and pretend to be what you are not to attract the attention of the opposite sex!



### *What is the need for marriage ?*

Marriage has many functions. Everybody needs *companionship* and marriage has the potential for the closest possible human companionship - that between a husband and wife.

Marriage also offers the possibility of a *stable relationship*, since it involves a commitment to stay together. If you honour this *commitment*, you are more likely to forgive each others' faults and make the many adjustments which are necessary between two people who live closely together.

In many modern societies, people live together without getting married. Such couples often break up because of the lack of any commitment to stay together. Any children they have are often socially ostracized because society does not approve of children born outside marriage.

Hence if you make a decision to live with a person of the opposite sex and want a close stable relationship, marriage is for you.

### *Which is preferable - love marriages or arranged marriages ?*

Both have advantages as well as disadvantages & neither can be considered superior.

Love marriages are not uncommon these days. If you do fall in love you should be careful that what you are feeling is not an infatuation or a passing fancy that will not last long.

When you are in love you often overlook the faults in your partner; but once you get married, these faults can begin a series of arguments, since you expected your partner to be perfect and have no faults.

Some couples elope or get married without their parents permission. This may not be fair on your parents who cannot be expected to forget all the love and affection they invested in you over all these years. You may also not be ready to do without them. Even after marriage, parents play an important part in your lives and this is more so when you have children who will benefit from having grandparents.

In spite of the disadvantage of not knowing much about your partner before you get married, arranged marriages are often successful if you are willing to make the necessary adjustments and commitments required of any marriage. Further, you have the support of the others around you, who are also involved in helping you make it work.



### *What is the role of sex in marriage ?*

*Sex is an integral part of any marriage though not the most important.* The desire for sexual satisfaction is a basic biological need but the expression of it in the context of marriage is two fold.

One, it is a form of *sharing the love* you feel for your partner as well as receiving the physical expression of your partner's love for you. It is hence meant to be enjoyable for both partners. The second function of sex in marriage is to have children.

Unlike sex before marriage or outside marriage which is not socially sanctioned, sex in marriage has the full sanction of society and religion and therefore meant to be enjoyed and adds considerably to the emotional closeness that partners feel for each other.

There are however some common misconceptions prevalent in society that may mar sexual satisfaction.

Some people falsely believe that sex is to be enjoyed only by men and respectable women should not enjoy sex. Others believe that the responsibility of successful sexual satisfaction lies with the husband. Both of these are false and both partners are equally responsible for each others and their own sexual satisfaction.

Some people falsely equate sex only with the act of intercourse without realising that the act of making love also has an emotional component. Talking to each other, stimulating each other emotionally and physically, are all important prerequisites for satisfactory intercourse.

It is also important to be sensitive to your partner's moods as he/she may be tired, unwell or upset and not feel like having sex.

There is no rule that sex must be had at a particular frequency, or that one must be interested in it all the time.

Other false beliefs that cause unnecessary worry and anxiety, especially among men are:

worry about the size and shape of the genitalia (it really does not matter);

inability to perform, [get an erection] on any occasion, means that you have serious problems, (not true - this usually happens because you were not in the mood or were tired or upset and not because of any physical problem);

worried that because you have had sexual thoughts regarding people of the same sex occasionally or even an actual experience, you are a homo sexual (not necessarily true - these are sometimes part of adolescent development. However if you are predominantly attracted towards people of the same sex then you may need to seek professional help).



*The basic ingredients of a successful marriage are:*

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&  
MARRIAGE

- making a *commitment* to do your best to make your marriage work and sticking to that commitment inspite of problems.

- treating your partner with *love and respect* exactly as you would like her/him to treat you (eg. showing appreciation, accepting criticism etc.)
- *avoiding extra marital sexual/emotional relationships* that usually cause more trouble than happiness with real risks of breaking up your marriage or giving you a sexually transmitted disease such as syphilis or worse - AIDS.
- sharing a partner's joys and sorrows, hopes, fear and *talking* to each other about these.
- *sharing responsibilities* and not expecting the other partners to do all the work.
- and above all - *spending time together.*



## PREGNANCY AND CONTRACEPTION

The arrival of a new baby is a happy social event. It is particularly satisfying when it is an extension of a mutually satisfactory relationship between a couple. Biologically, pregnancy extends from fertilization of the ovum till the baby is born, 40 weeks later.

As in the adolescent, hormones play a large role in the determination of the physical and emotional changes in the pregnant woman. While the baby and uterus grow, the woman puts on weight, her tummy enlarges and the breasts get ready to produce milk. The details regarding the changes and growth during pregnancy are there in your text-books and we will not repeat them here.

ADULTHOOD  
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MARRIAGE

During pregnancy, women tend to be anxious and tense, sometimes irritable and emotional. There is a need for emotional support, increased nutritional requirements like iron, vitamins and preventive tetanus toxoid for the mother. She also needs *regular check-up during the pregnancy and trained care during delivery* to ensure that the baby is born with a minimum of risk and that both she and the child are healthy.

After the baby is born both the parents have a role in supporting each other and taking responsibility in looking after the child.

This responsibility also means planning the family: the right time to have the first child, the number of children to have and the spacing between children. *The norm today is in small families* where the parents can concentrate their resources on one or two children and give them the best education and other opportunities. These decisions are not left to chance alone but can be planned.

You should therefore be *aware of the various contraceptive measures* available and be able to exercise a choice within your requirements and social and religious beliefs.

**Contraceptive measures** can be considered in two major heads a) Permanent b) Temporary.

**Permanent methods** are surgical sterilization - vasectomy in the male & tubectomy in the female. These are irreversible and can be considered once the family is complete.

**Temporary measures** can be many: barriers against pregnancy, hormonal methods, other miscellaneous means.

**Barriers** - the commonest and cheapest method is the condom which if used properly (see box in last chapter) affords protection against conception. *It is also useful against transmitting STDs & AIDS.*

Other barriers like the diaphragm and cervical cap are also available. Spermicidal creams and gels can also be used, but are more effective when combined with the above.

**IUCDs (Intra Uterine Contraceptive Devices)** like the "loop" or "copper T" are placed inside the uterus thus forming a barrier against allowing a fertilized egg to implant in the uterus.

Hormonal preparations "the pill" are relatively more efficient in preventing pregnancy by not allowing an ovum to mature and be ready for fertilization. This then means that the pill has to be taken regularly. Some of these can be implanted into the body.

Other methods which rely on the **safe periods** (ie, not having intercourse in the time when ovulation occurs) or practices like "coitus interruptus" (ie withdrawing the penis from the vagina before ejaculation) are less efficient but also possible. These methods have been advocated by some religions which do not permit other methods of contraception described above.

**ABORTIONS**, ie terminating a pregnancy before the foetus is able to survive, is not a very desirable method of limiting a family. Apart from the danger to the health of the mother, abortions may lead to a lot of psychosocial trauma, can produce intense guilt and lead to long lasting ill health



### *What makes a happy home ?*

*Home is not merely the house you live in but the total atmosphere created by those living in that house.*

*Homes are places where children grow and develop their skills and personality and values, under the loving care and protection of their parents and brother and sisters; a place where parents derive immense pleasure watching their children grow up stage by stage; where husbands and wives love, care and respect each other; where aged parents are loved and taken care of and where generations live together in perfect companionship.*

*Homes form miniature societies within themselves and form the backbones of any society and nation.*

## What is Drug Abuse?



Use of any substance outside of biological or medical necessity can be considered as drug abuse. However this term is commonly used with respect to the wrong use of *substances that stimulate, depress* or otherwise affect the mental faculties. These include tobacco, alcohol, marijuana (grass, pot, ganja), sedatives (barbiturates, valium, etc), stimulants (amphetamines, cocaine, etc.), opiates (opium, pethidine, morphine, heroin, fortwin etc) and others.

One characteristic all these drugs have in common is the potential for *habituation and addiction*.

The use of some of these drugs are socially acceptable and often associated with adulthood and manliness. Frequently products like cigarettes and alcohol are advertised with this implication to promote sales, and it is only natural that this subtle pressure will ultimately be passed on to you as teenagers and young adults.

Similarly, in the need for identification and acceptance within your friends, you may face a certain degree of pressure to try out some of these drugs. Adolescence as we discussed earlier is a phase where lot of experimenting takes place.

Remember, *you have a responsibility* to decide whether or not you should!

DRUG ABUSE  
&  
ALCOHOLISM

To exercise this responsibility, you should be able to evaluate all the facts related to the use of drugs and explore some of the myths.

## **SOME FACTS:**

All these drugs have a potential for addiction.

All these drugs will involve your physical and mental health.

The chances are that you will progress from drug to drug usually to more potent and hazardous ones.

Use, even occasional, is likely to get you into trouble at home, with authorities and with society at large.

When under the influence of drugs there is a possibility that you may indulge in hazardous activities which you would normally have avoided - driving dangerously, visiting prostitutes etc.

Most of these drugs are expensive and often beyond the means of a teenager.

Continued abuse of these drugs can lead to all sorts of problems in your studies, relationship with your friends, teachers and relatives.

Continuing to use drugs requires a steady stream of money. It is well known that users end up with other antisocial behaviours like stealing, prostitution, etc. to finance the habit.

*It is also very important to examine some of THE MYTHS associated with drugs:*

Only those with significant personal or family problems will get addicted.

Drugs will give courage to face situations and improve mental and physical performance.

Experimental and occasional use does not lead to addiction.

All these are untrue and there is no medical evidence to support these beliefs. On the



contrary, some drugs can be so dangerous that even one exposure may lead to addiction or even mental derangement or physical illness.

Detailed below are *some of the commonly abused drugs* and the effects they have on the individual, for your reference.

Tobacco smoking: Can lead to breathlessness, cough, lung cancer and heart attacks. Nonsmokers are also at risk in the presence of smokers. Physical dependence occurs slowly but can set in.

Alcohol: Alcohol affects the digestive system, liver, nerves, muscles and the brain. Alcohol during pregnancy affects the baby. Addiction is common. Since there is some social sanction to this habit, abuse is frequent and involves a large section of the population. Its impact on health, work efficiency and the financial status of a family is quite significant.

Cannabis: Known by various names (ganja, marijuana, hashish, grass, pot, etc), its use is very common and often is a stepping stone towards harder and dangerous drugs. This is also known to produce mental imbalances and a state leading to loss of drive and motivation in some people.

Stimulants: like amphetamines and cocaine are used because of their euphoric effects. They are also called "uppers" because of this. Addiction is very rapid and gross mental illness can result, sometimes even with a single use.

Sedatives: like barbiturates and other sleeping pills, are also called "downers". The market is flooded with various drugs in this class and sometimes even medical practitioners inadvertently may cause addiction of these by indiscriminate use. Abuse is common and dependence develops over days to weeks.

Hallucinogens: like LSD can be very dangerous with permanent mental damage reported even after a single use.

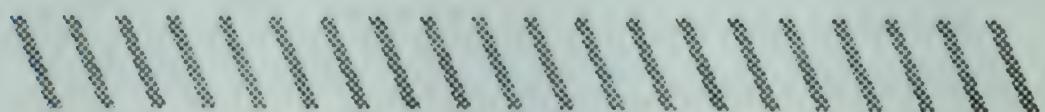
Opiates: are the commonest of the hard drugs abused around the world. Opium is used in its raw form or as its derivatives morphine, pethidine, fortwin and more commonly heroin. These drugs are highly addictive and can lead to various complications in the user. Among

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other things there is a risk of contacting infections like HIV (AIDS) among those who use it intravenously. Physical health deterioration and mental depressions are common and a large percentage of heroin users die young either through overdoses or other physical illnesses.

It is important for you to be able to *recognise a user, as well as a pusher*. This is so that you are not 'accidentally' introduced into the habit without your knowledge. Users often are dull and drowsy for no apparent reason, do poorly at work and frequently have a poor social reputation. Others are those who may put up a false sense of bravado, encouraging an attitude that the use of these substances equate them to being "grown up".

Pushers are those who sell these drugs and, as you can surmise, have a lot to gain economically by inducting new users. They have been known to use all kinds of means, fair and foul, to come to places where young people collect and sell their drugs! Report any such people to your authorities so that they are curbed.



### *IF I AM ON IT, CAN I BE HELPED ?*

*Yes, if you or a good friend of yours has become a user, it is possible to come off the habit. Remember, it may be a big struggle with some of the drugs, but it is possible. Drop your inhibitions and talk to your teacher or parents about the kind of help available in your area. Medical and psychological treatment is available.*

*The best way to come off it is to not start at all. Know the facts. LEARN TO SAY "NO".*

## WHAT ARE STDs ?

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STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) are a class of diseases which are usually spread during sexual activity.

**STDs INCLUDE MANY DIFFERENT DISEASES** (not just syphilis and gonorrhoea)

*Can occur again and again* because immunity can't usually be built up, and there is no vaccination against them.

*Can have serious and permanent consequences* such as blindness, sterility and death. Women and new born babies are especially vulnerable.

*STDs are spreading rapidly*



**THEY ARE SPREADING BECAUSE -**

*Sexual activity is increasing*, especially among young people

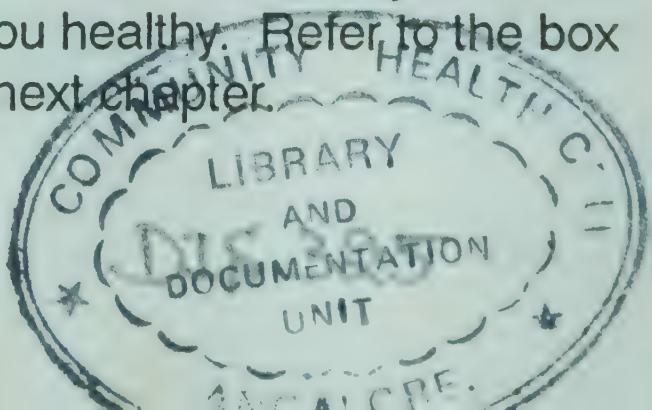
*People aren't aware of the diseases*, so they ignore the symptoms

*Infected people don't inform partners* to prevent further spread

*Many symptoms are not easily noticed*, so the disease spreads and invades other parts of the body.

**YOU CAN HELP STOP STDs BY LEARNING THE FACTS.** Safe sex is a concept and practice of sexual activity which is aimed at keeping you healthy. Refer to the box on safe sex in the next chapter.

SEXUALLY  
TRANSMITTED  
DISEASES



Given below, for your reference, is a brief description of the common STDs seen in India. If you suspect you may have contracted an STD, consult a qualified medical practitioner. Do not rely on self-styled specialists and quacks.

### GONorrhoea

It's caused by the *Neisseria gonorrhoea* bacteria, which live in warm, moist areas of the body - primarily the lining of the urethra (Urinary canal) and in the cervix of the uterus.

It's transmitted during sexual contact. It cannot be picked up from toilet seats, towels etc.

Symptoms do not always occur. If they do, they appear 3 days to 3 weeks after sexual contact with an infected partner:

- Whitish discharge from genitals
- Burning sensation during urination
- Abdominal pain or tenderness
- Abnormal menstruation

Symptoms may disappear within a few weeks, but the disease may STILL BE PRESENT in the body. If you even suspect exposure to gonorrhea, seek medical attention.

Possible complications:

- Pain
- Sterility
- Infections
- Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) (in females)
- Permanent blindness (in newborn babies)



### SYPHILIS

It's caused by *Treponema pallidum*, a microscopic organism.

It's transmitted almost always by sexual contact. But the organisms can also spread by skin contact (where the skin is broken or cut).

Symptoms eventually disappear, but the disease may continue to progress if untreated. They occur in stages:

#### 1st STAGE (1 to 12 weeks after contact)

- reddish bump or ulcer at the site of infection

IIInd STAGE (1 to 6 months after contact)

- Rash
- Enlarged lymph nodes
- Fever, sore throat

IIIrd STAGE (3 years or more after contact)

- Ulcers
- Joint pain
- Loss of sensations, damage to heart, blood vessels, spinal cord and/or brain

Complications

- Damage to heart and major blood vessels, resulting in heart failure and usually death.
- Brain and spinal cord damage causing paralysis, insanity and eventually death
- Birth defects and new born death - If the mother has untreated syphilis, the disease can pass to the foetus (If detected, congenital syphilis can be cured).

## OTHER STDs

### CHLAMYDIAL INFECTION

Caused by *C. trachomatis*. Chlamydia has exactly the same signs as gonorrhoea.

### CHANCROID

Caused by the bacterium *H. ducreyi*. Is the commonest cause of genital ulcer disease in most parts of the developing world, and involves painful, dirty-grey genital ulcers. Sometimes enlarged lymph nodes in the groin (called buboes) develop.

### LYMPHOGRANULOMA VENEREUM

Is an infection which mainly affects the lymphatic system and is caused by *C. trachomatis*. After a short incubation period a small ulcer develops on the genitals. The ulcer heals on its own very quickly and may be unnoticed.

Later the infection spreads to the lymphatics. A bubo forms at the joint between the thigh and the abdomen, and may lead to a swelling of the genitals.

The bubo may become an abscess with many openings and may result in permanent genital deformity.

### DONOVANOSIS (granuloma inguinale)

Is caused by the bacterium *C. granulomatis*, and causes genital ulcers without lymph node enlargement or buboes. The ulcer may be around the anal region, rarely on the other parts of the skin. Ulcers are firm and beefy

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red in colour. Complications are genital deformities and rarely cancer.

### TRICHOMONIASIS

Is caused by the parasite *T. vaginalis*.

Females may have no symptoms, or may complain of vaginal discharge and itchiness of the vagina and vulva.

In males there may be inflammation of the urethra and prostate gland with slight watery, white discharge.

### CANDIDIASIS

Is caused by a fungus *C. albicans*, and causes a white curdy discharge from the vagina.

### GENITAL HERPES

Is caused by the virus Herpes simplex and results in multiple, painful, shallow ulcers.

### ACUTE EPIDIDYMO-ORCHITIS

Is a severe inflammation of the testis and the coiled tube leading from the testis to the spermatic cord (epididymis). It is caused by pus-producing bacteria, e.g. *E. coli*, or STD causing organisms, e.g. gonococci and chlamydia, or viruses such as the mumps virus.

Symptoms include severe pain in one or both testes, sudden swelling of the testes with possible urethral discharge.

### PELVIC INFLAMMATORY DISEASE (PID)

Involves inflammation of all the pelvic organs. The most common cause is infection of the fallopian tubes or uterus with gonorrhoea, chlamydia or anaerobic organisms.

Those with acute PID are feverish and with associated lower abdominal pain, backache, vaginal discharge and difficult or painful sexual intercourse.



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*STDs can easily be prevented if you behave responsibly. More details of prevention is taken up with prevention of AIDS.*

## What is AIDS?

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It's *Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome* the name given to a serious illness that impairs the body's ability to fight infection.

*Without full resistance*, a person with AIDS is susceptible to certain diseases and infections.

### WHY SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT AIDS?



Because this problem is very *prevalent in our community*. It was initially thought to be restricted to other countries, but that is not true. HIV infection and AIDS has been known in India since 1986 and the numbers are rising. In 1994, anywhere upto 2 million people in India may be infected and carrying the virus!

Because HIV is a deadly infection which leads to AIDS. You can die of this if you are not careful. If you take simple precautions, *this disease is 100% preventable!*

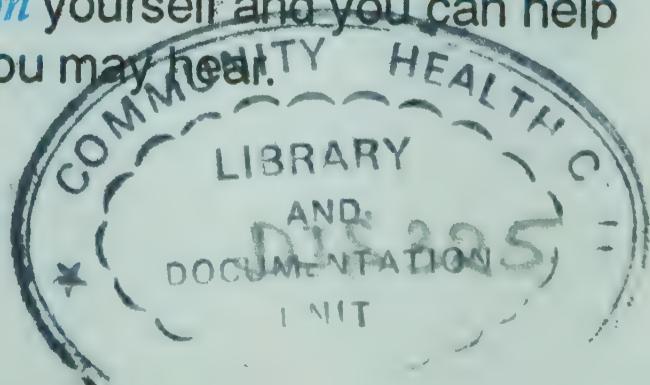
Because your knowledge is the key to separating the *facts from the fiction* surrounding this illness.

You can help stop the *epidemic of fear*

The *myths and misconceptions* about AIDS have caused needless panic and concern. There's absolutely no reason to become burdened by feelings of fear.

ACQUIRED IMMUNO DEFICIENCY SYNDROME

By learning about AIDS, you can help *prevent getting the infection* yourself and you can help dispel any myths you may have.



## WHAT CAUSES AIDS?

Researchers have isolated and identified the cause - a virus called HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus). HIV changes the genetic structure of the cell it attacks.

### HOW A HEALTHY IMMUNE SYSTEM WORKS

Human blood contains different types of white blood cells that play different roles in protecting against disease. Amongst the type of white blood cells called lymphocytes, are the B cells and T cells.

These cells produce antibodies that fight disease causing organisms.



HIV is particularly harmful to the T-cells which leaves the immune system weakened. Once immunity is low, the person is vulnerable to all kinds of infections that would normally not have been a problem. The individual may not be able to withstand even common infections like colds and flu because of poor immunity. This stage is called AIDS.

After getting the infection, the stage of AIDS may take anywhere from a few months to 10 or 15 years to develop. All through this while, even though the virus is in the body and active, the person will not be aware of it and feels as healthy as any one else. Once AIDS sets in, he/she will be quite sick and death follows fairly soon.

### HOW IS HIV (THE VIRUS THAT CAUSES AIDS) TRANSMITTED FROM ONE PERSON TO ANOTHER?

HIV can be transmitted by *sexual contact, sharing an infected hypodermic needle* or, less often, through *blood or blood products*. Also, an infected *mother may transmit the virus to her baby* before, during or after birth (possibly through breast-feeding).

ACQUIRED IMMUNO DEFICIENCY SYNDROME

When a person is infected, he/she will **have no definite symptoms or discomfort** to show for this.

Some people may get a mild fever or flu-like feeling for a few days. So mild that this may not even be noticed. This is called sero-conversion fever and recovery occurs even without any treatment in a few days.

Apart from this, he/she may go on for years without any manifestation of the disease AIDS. In fact, they would look and feel as healthy as anyone else, even when examined.

However, their blood is infected and they are fully capable of transmitting the infection to others during all those years through sex or blood.



### **IS AIDS HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS?**

Current scientific research indicates that **AIDS is not transmitted through casual contact**, even when people live in the same household, and that it's not spread through the air.

#### ***HIV CANNOT ENTER THE BODY THROUGH :***

*living together, toilet seats,  
sharing clothes, sharing food,  
sport, swimming, bathing together,  
touching, holding hands, dancing,  
hugging, kissing*

*sneezing, coughing, breathing,  
flies / mosquitoes.*

ACQUIRED IMMUNO  
DEFICIENCY  
SYNDROME

## WHO GETS AIDS?

All adults and adolescents are potentially at risk of getting AIDS. The risk is real if *you indulge* in unsafe sex, intravenous drugs or if you need frequent blood transfusions.

### **HIV CAN ENTER THE BODY THROUGH**

*Sexual intercourse - see box on safe sex*

*Infected blood, sharing I.V. needles*

*Infected pregnant mother to newborn child*

### **PREVENTION OF STDs & AIDS**



People in monogamous sexual relationships are unlikely to contact an STDs or AIDS. Adopt the values and practice of **safe sex** in your life. Take preventive measures by using protective condoms, limit number of partners, etc.



#### **WHAT IS SAFE SEX?**

Safe sex is the concept and practice of sexual activity which is aimed at keeping you healthy. It is important to know what kinds of sexual activity places you at risk for contacting AIDS or STDs.

**Safest sex is between a couple who are mutually faithful.**

High risk would be any kinds of penetrative sex: vaginal, anal or oral where it involves mixing of blood or body fluids - particularly if one of the partners may have indulged in high risk behaviour or is unknown.

A condom *used properly* reduces the risk significantly but is not fail proof. (Refer to the box on proper use of condoms.) The risk related to sexual activity progressively decreases when there is no mixing of blood and body fluids. Thus dry kissing, solo or mutual masturbation, heavy petting may be no risk or low risk.

**ACQUIRED IMMUNO  
DEFICIENCY  
SYNDROME**

## PROPER USE OF CONDOMS

Check expiry date on packing.

Ensure that it is the right way on.

Expel air from the condom and if it does not have a teat, leave half an inch free at the tip.

Put the condom on only when the penis is fully erect.

Roll on the condom all the way to the base of the penis.

Do not use petroleum based lubricants as it may damage the latex; if necessary use aqueous based lubricants like "KY Jelly".

After use, remove the condom carefully, by holding the base tightly to avoid spilling, leaking or slipping off.

Dispose of the condom carefully, preferably flushing it down the toilet or by burning or burying it.

Do not re-use



Know about STDs so you can recognize any symptoms - especially the ones that "disappear" though the disease remains. Seek medical attention promptly if you notice any suspicious signs especially if you have any reason to think you're infected consult a qualified medical practitioner. *Do not visit self-styled sex specialists or quacks.*

Avoid using drugs. HIV can definitely spread through *contaminated needles* when used through the intravenous (I.V.) or intramuscular (I.M.) route. Further, drugs or alcohol can cloud your judgement and let you forget safe behaviour.

Do not demand injections from your doctor. If you do need blood or blood products, check to ensure that it has been tested for HIV.

Similarly, if you do need injections, make sure only *sterile syringes and needles* are used every time. This means adequately boiled, autoclaved or disposable - it is not mandatory that only disposable ones are used.

ACQUIRED IMMUNO  
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SYNDROME

A lady who is HIV infected must remember that she may infect her baby if she gets pregnant.

Preventing HIV infection is very important.

*Adequate knowledge and safe behaviour* are the only ways to do that. Teach your friends and others close to you to be safe.

If someone does get infected, *there is no need to ostracize or isolate that person. He or she is no risk to others at home, school or at work and can lead a normal life in society.*

Discriminating against them, being afraid of them or isolating them is unnecessary and is also more likely to make them depressed or bitter. Often, their families also have to face these social responses. By learning the facts and teaching others around you, you can help in shaping the social responses of those around you towards the infected individuals and their families.



### ***HELP STOP THE SPREAD OF STDs & AIDS***

*Stay faithful to your partner - avoid pre-marital & extra-marital sexual relations. Learn and practice safe sex.*

*Know about STDs so you can recognize any symptoms. Seek medical attention promptly. Avoid using drugs, particularly those that are used through needles.*

*Help others learn about STDs & AIDS by talking to your friends and encouraging safe behaviour.*

*Help stop social discrimination against those who are infected.*

ACQUIRED IMMUNO  
DEFICIENCY  
SYNDROME



USE CONDOMS

◦ STAY FAITHFUL

◦ RECOGNISE &  
◦ TREAT STDs EARLY

AVOID IV DRUGS

◦ TEACH OTHERS

# ADOLSENSE

Adolescence is that period in our lives - 12 to 20 years - when several major changes occur. There is a burning desire for new experiences, knowledge and getting to adulthood. If this fire is fanned right and kept under control, it can enhance the development of the colour in the personality of the individual. On the other hand the fire could also destroy if one is not careful.

This booklet is aimed at addressing questions that are difficult to ask. □



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**RESOURCE & REFERENCE CENTRE,  
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